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# HAS THE CONSERVATIVE SOUTH A PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE?

BY A NATIONAL DEMOCRAT.

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THE Republican Party was in its origin and remains to this day a sectional party. Its Presidents, without exception, have been men of the North, and by the electoral votes of the Northern States they have attained office. With the exception of Maryland in 1896, no Southern State, save in the reconstruction period, when the white vote was in large part excluded, has ever given its electoral votes to a Republican candidate for the Presidency. The enactment of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, in 1854, precipitated the "irrepressible conflict" upon the slavery question and destroyed the Whig party; for upon that question the party was divided. The majority of the Northern Whigs were ready to join the Republican Party; the Southern Whigs became Democrats. Since that time, with the exception of the years when free government was suppressed in the South and military rule and the negro vote gave the Republicans a foothold there, the white Republicans of the South, a hopeless and impotent minority, have counted for little either in the councils of the party, in elections or in national or local legislation.

The strength of the Republican Party lies altogether in the North, and the sectional character of its aims and policy has been repeatedly reflected in the attempts of its chief statesmen to confirm and perpetuate its sway by diminishing the voice and influence of the Democratic South in Presidential and Congressional elections.

The Democratic Party is powerful alike in the North and in the South. It has elected many Democratic Governors, Congressmen and Senators in the Northern States. The present Governors of six Northern States are Democrats. When the Sixtieth Con-

gress assembles next December, forty-four Democrats from Northern States will have seats in the House of Representatives. In existence more than a century, the Democracy has always been a national party.

Yet in sixty years no Southern Democrat has been elected to the Presidency. James K. Polk of Tennessee, elected in 1844, was the last. Since the nomination of John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky in 1860, forty-seven years ago, that party has made no Southern man its candidate. McClellan, Seymour, Greeley—who was Northern, and Republican into the bargain—Tilden, Hancock, Cleveland, Bryan and Parker were all of the North.

Thus by custom and prescription it has come about that the men of one-half the Union are excluded from the honors of the Chief Magistracy. No statesman who is a citizen of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas or Virginia—thirteen States, with a geographical area of 793,000 square miles, and a population numbering 23,500,000—may ask his friends, in present conditions, to present his name to the great quadrennial council of his party as an aspirant to the nomination of the high office of President.

Ambition stirs the souls of Southern men, upon many among whom wisdom has been bestowed. The unwritten decree bids them choose, as the goal of the one and the field for the other, no higher place than a State office or a seat in the national House or Senate. The Constitution declares that no bill of attainder shall be passed; yet, by the custom and practice of parties, an unenacted attainder has wrought disqualification of a great part of the citizens of the Republic, debarring them from privileges and honors freely open to their fellow countrymen.

This practice, denounced by reason, repugnant to justice and opposed by considerations of the highest public welfare, is sustained only by an outworn sanction. It is time to make an end of it! The argument of political expediency no longer avails as the warrant and justification for debarring Southern Democrats from the Presidency. Rather have the march of years and of events, the changing opinions of men and the raising of new issues of weight and moment, brought the complete rehabilitation of the South clearly into the view of the Democratic Party as the path of wisdom and of safety.

The brave men of the South have a right to demand, and they should demand in the Presidential year of 1908, that this disability be forever removed, that they no longer be constrained to accept with unquestioning faith and loyalty the candidates the Northern Democrats may offer to their suffrages, and that the pathway to the White House shall once more be opened to their statesmen.

Have they not expiated the errors of the past by almost half a century of renunciation? Passions have cooled, old resentments are forgotten. If the uncalled-for question of the complete "reconstruction" of the South and of its entire loyalty to the Union be raised, let its contribution to the war that effaced the last vestige of Spanish dominion from the New World give the answer.

It is a weary rôle the Democracy of the South has been asked to play—to efface itself, always to defer to the judgment and to confirm the resolves of the Democrats of the North, to accept their candidates without question, to support them with devoted loyalty, and to follow them uncomplainingly to the defeat that, with two exceptions in fifty years, has been their doom. The position of the South has been hard. It has become unbearable. The Democrats of the former Slave States have had no option. Not two courses, only one has lain open to them. However little the candidate might be to their liking, no matter how slight might be the chance of his election, they have been forced by compelling considerations of their own welfare and safety to support him. To elect him, if possible, has been their hope. To maintain at all costs the control of their party, a party of white men, over the offices of their own States, has been with them a policy dictated by supreme need, and, although national candidates supported by the solid South have one after another gone down to defeat, the Democrats of these States have in all these years maintained an efficient party organization and have kept the State Governments in their own hands. They elect their Governors. Legislators chosen by them make the State laws. There is no shadow of doubt that men from any part of the country, in their place and with their experience and their memories of the wreck and ruin, the confusion, the scandals and the horror of negro domination, would do what they have done. Permanently establishing the government of white men in their respective States, which was the matter of supreme moment to

them, they have patiently put up with exclusion from the full privileges of their political birthright.

The time is ripe and overripe for change. It is time to discredit the contention that only a man from one section of the country can be trusted in the office of President. A little more than twenty years ago, Henry W. Grady, at the annual banquet of the New England Society in New York, spoke a message of cordial good-will from the South to the North. In the most eloquent passage of that memorable utterance he said, referring to the war between the States:

"I am glad that the omniscient God held the balance of battle in His mighty hand, and that human slavery was swept forever from American soil and the American Union was saved from the wreck of war."

He spoke of the imperishable brotherhood of the American people, and continued:

"Now, what answer has New England to this message? Will she permit the prejudice of war to remain in the hearts of the conquerors when it has died in the hearts of the conquered? Will she transmit this prejudice to the next generation that in their hearts, which never felt the generous ardor of conflict, it may perpetuate itself? Will she withhold, save in strained courtesy, the hand which, straight from his soldier's heart, Grant offered to Lee at Appomattox?"

It was the privilege of the conqueror to impose terms; the conquered must accept the consequence of defeat. The South took up arms to sever the Union of the States, thereby expecting to secure for itself the full enjoyment of what it considered its rights. It was mistaken; it lost its cause. It was in accordance with logic, with law and with usage, that it should be made to pass through a period of probation before it could be restored to its former status and receive back its political franchise. Well would it have been for the men and women of the Southern States, well for the whole Union, if Abraham Lincoln had been spared to carry out his far-seeing, wise and humane policy of reconstruction, as distinguished from the harsh, punitive policy later adopted under the leadership of Thaddeus Stevens, Charles Sumner, Ben Wade and Henry Winter Davis. To the contention of the Democrats, as expressed by their resolution in the House, that "acts of secession are not valid to destroy the Union and yet valid to destroy State Governments, and the political privileges of their citizens," there was no satisfactory answer.

Lincoln's conditions of reconstruction included the ending of resistance, the appointment of provisional Governors, oaths of amnesty to be taken by at least one-tenth of the white voters, a Republican form of government without interference by Congress in the States, with no mention of negro suffrage.

Between this plan and the plan of reconstruction adopted by Congress in the heat and passion of the conflict with President Andrew Johnson, the plan of dividing the South into military districts under district commanders appointed by the President, having authority to annul the acts of State Governments which were provisional only, and might be superseded or abolished by the Federal law, there was all the difference that lies between a vengeful conqueror, making a desert and calling it peace, and a wise, far-seeing, great-minded ruler recalling to their allegiance his erring but not unforgivable provinces. Lincoln thought the South worth saving as an integral part of the Union of States. Thaddeus Stevens proposed to confiscate all of the estates of the rebels above the value of \$10,000 or including more than 200 acres of land; each freedman to receive forty acres of land thus taken, and the residue of the spoil, estimated at that time at \$3,500,000,000 to be applied to the payment of the national debt.

Toward a foreign enemy, distrusted and feared, which a conqueror intended to destroy utterly, such a policy would be at least intelligible, whatever might be said of its humanity. But the Southern States were to be brought back into the Union; they were to constitute a part of the national dominion, and in the view of a conqueror with even the slightest perception of the economic necessities of the period of upbuilding to follow the desolation of war, like Grant, who bade Lee retain the horses of his army as they would be needed for the spring ploughing, the policy advocated by Stevens would have seemed one of madness and barbarism.

Then came negro suffrage. If the Thirteenth Amendment prohibiting slavery were ratified, Lincoln was content to be "pretty nearly or quite done with Constitutional Amendments." Not so Sumner and the radical reconstructionists. Resistance on the part of the South to the outrages and oppressions of reconstruction measures, was to be punished by subjecting the white population to the rule of the negro, to the end that the fruits of reconstruction, as the dominant party had planned and imposed it,

might be made secure. The ratification of the Fifteenth Amendment was forced upon the States of the South, and reconstruction, except for its failures, its crimes, its frightful consequences to the people who were its victims, was complete.

Contemporary opinion of this work of oppression, in which passion supplanted patriotism and the establishment of party supremacy was made paramount to the reestablishment of the perfect union of the States, spoke its protest in a memorial addressed to Congress by the New York Chamber of Commerce. A special meeting of that body was held on May 10th, 1866, called to consider and report upon the tax proposed by Congress of five cents a pound on cotton. There was talk at the meeting of the tyranny of taxation without representation. It was pointed out that the unjust impost would deepen the economic blight that already rested upon the South. In the memorial occurs these passages:

"The Committee feel that it would be wiser and better to lift up those who are now cast down, and by just and generous legislation to inspire the Southern people with the hope of better days, rather than by an opposite course to prolong the era of political and commercial distrust. . . .

"It should appear in after-years, when prosperity in the South takes the place of present adversity and fraternal relations are again restored in and out of Congress, that in the days of her weakness the North and West did not take undue advantage of the South."

That voice of the larger statesmanship, that vision of the coming time when the conquered half of the Union should vie with the conquering half in adding to its wealth, and in helping us on in our irresistible progress toward our present greatness among nations, may have been heard, but it was not heeded. Yet it was all easy to foresee. To an unprejudiced mind the planning of a wise and saving policy would not have been difficult. Lincoln was without prejudice. He saw into the future. The "Elder Statesmen" of the New York Chamber of Commerce took thought of future years and gave wise counsel. But long after the last shot was fired, after the soldiers of the victorious army had returned to productive toil, while the defenders of the lost cause, vanquished, tattered, ruined, were seeking ways and means to begin life anew, the vindictive spirit swayed Congress, and in decades of stagnation and poverty the South and the country paid the penalty of that blindness and perversity.

Present opinion of the policy that prevailed forty years ago, and particularly of the policy of placing the ballot in the hands of freed slaves, may be read in a multitude of utterances.

Speaking at Lexington, Virginia, upon the occasion of the centennial of the birth of General Robert E. Lee on January 19th last, Charles Francis Adams used these words:

"Because no blood flowed on the scaffold and no confiscation of homes or lands marked the close of our war of secession, it has always been assumed by us of the victorious party that extreme, indeed unprecedented, clemency was shown to the vanquished. On the contrary, it may not unfairly be doubted whether a people prostrated after civil strife has often received severer measure than was inflicted on the so-called reconstructed Confederate States immediately succeeding the close of strife."

Discredited at the time, repudiated by the political heirs of its authors and of its beneficiaries, condemned by the blight and disaster inflicted upon millions of people, the policy of ostracism pursued against the South has had its full day. If we are not now one Union of States, we never shall be one; and if either the passions of far-off conflict or the ban of long-past errors are still ghosts that can be made to walk and inspire fright, then it is clear that we are forevermore doomed to be not one people, but two.

It is not so. There is no taint of blood, no caste, no sectional disparity in this country of ours that abridges the privileges or bounds the honorable ambition of the men of one State more than those of another.

The Presidency is open to a candidate from the South.

Other reasons than considerations of human justice and the desire to make reparation for old wrongs, reasons of present vital force, commend the choice of a Southern Democrat for the honors of the nomination and of party leadership in 1908. It would be an act of wise national policy and of economic redemption. It would provide a way of escape from present-day tendencies toward courses of folly and of danger.

The South in coming years is undoubtedly to be the home of conservatism. It is to those States that we must look for sobered public opinion to oppose the radical doctrines that in the North have obscured the ancient faith of both parties, until, as Mr. Cleveland puts it, we see upon the banners borne by their leaders



new and strange symbols betokening the adoption of principles born of the restless, unsteady spirit of innovation, principles untried in our national life and unsanctioned by experience.

Disputable as the assertion may appear, the South, through the greater part of its political history, has been guided by the spirit of conservatism. The Civil War, with all its dreadful waste and fought as it was to destroy the Union, originated chiefly in the South's desire to defend and conserve political and property rights it held to be inalienable. The men of the South believed in the sovereign right of a State to resist Federal encroachment, and impartial history now concedes that the necessary compromises of the Convention that framed the Constitution, compromises without which it would have failed of ratification by the States, left that great question undetermined, to be forever settled by the war of 1861-65. They believed slaves to be property, lawful property. The extreme and unhappy measures to which they resorted were for the protection of what they believed to be the rights of their States, and of their property rights, which they had persuaded themselves were under menace from the triumphant Republican Party.

That the Know-nothing movement obtained no foothold in the South was an evidence also of the conservatism of its people. That manifestation of a narrow and prejudiced radicalism was confined to the North, where it attained to the dignity of party organization and political importance. The speeches of Henry A. Wise of Virginia gave voice to the broader enlightenment of the South, which favored a liberal policy of welcome and assimilation toward emigrants from the Old World, whose sturdy arms and patient toil have been of immeasurable service in the development of our national resources.

If the reproach be brought against the South that it gave hospitable acceptance to the financial doctrines of Mr. Bryan in 1896, it may be replied that his ideas attained their greatest momentum in the West and Northwest, and that belief in the virtues of bimetallism had taken root in so many Republican minds that the Republican candidate of that year doubted the expediency of a gold-standard declaration, and only after being much labored with did he reluctantly consent to make such a declaration himself.

Furthermore, at St. Louis in 1904, Southern delegates showed,

as Mr. John Sharp Williams phrased it, that while their warm hearts prompted them to express by cheers their personal admiration for Mr. Bryan, their cool judgment rejected much of his counsel and sanctioned the choice of other guides.

But most of all, and conspicuously, the conservatism of the South is manifested in its present critical and repelling attitude toward the newer articles of the Bryan faith. While recently solicited expressions from representative Democrats of the North present Mr. Bryan as the candidate certain to be named by the Democratic Convention next year, no other name being under consideration, representative men and many of the prominent Democratic newspapers of the South openly dissent from his doctrines, discountenance his ambition and express the hope that in the coming contest the party banner may be committed to other hands.

From the time when in his Madison Square Garden speech, delivered upon his return from Europe, Mr. Bryan advocated the Government ownership of railroads as a cure for abuses of corporate privilege, thus evidently hoping to take some of the wind out of the sails of Mr. Roosevelt, then and now stretched taut by every favoring breeze of radicalism, the South has looked with cold reserve upon the ambitious projects of the Nebraskan. The people of the Southern States have abundant reason for "viewing with alarm" any project for putting the operation of their railroads, under Federal laws, into Federal hands; and although Mr. Bryan has amended and modified his Government ownership plan, and has even attempted to withdraw it from present public consideration, the South continues to feel and to proclaim a profound distrust of a statesman capable of formulating, out of hand, a policy so repugnant to the people of States that in two campaigns have given him their loyal support.

Of necessity, the South is committed to conservative courses by its very rapid increase in wealth and productive power. Men who, after incredible hardships, by their genius and their toil have accumulated property, are little inclined to put it in jeopardy by inviting to posts of Government control and responsibility the "ambitious, unsteady and unsafe" advocates of strange and subversive policies. Nor can a continuance of industrial prosperity so dearly won be imperilled by encouraging one of the contestants in a mad race of radicalism.

In the past six years, the value of the South's cotton crop has

exceeded by \$1,185,963,100 the total value of the whole world's output of gold and silver. In two decades she has produced 184,182,400 bales of cotton, having a value of \$7,929,530,837. In gold or credits her exports of raw cotton have brought to the country more than \$2,000,000,000 in the last six years. In 1906, she produced 3,467,000 tons of pig-iron, \$641,720,000 worth of cotton, farm products of the value of \$2,000,000, lumber products of the value of \$300,000,000, and the assessed value of her property was \$8,025,000,000, an increase of nearly one hundred per cent. over the assessed valuation in 1890.

The South is astir with industrial life. From those States will come in the next decade the chief increase in the national wealth. Her best brains and her stoutest hands are engaged in the regeneration and the building up of her productive industries.

The voices, the votes and the influence of the men who are producing this new wealth in the South may surely be counted upon to help on any intelligently organized effort to rescue the Democratic Party from the perils of reckless adventures, and to set its feet once more in the path of safety.

The South has men of Presidential amplitude and capacity. She has but to come to a consciousness of her right, of her interest, of her power, and to offer to the Democracy of the nation a candidate of recognized worth to secure instant attention. If she would unite her forces with the Democrats of those Northern States where counsels of conservatism still prevail, or where such counsels would at once prevail if the path of hope and of success could be brought into view, the control of the National Convention could be secured, and the dawn of a new day would break upon the disorganized ranks of the Democracy.

These are but some of the reasons, for there are many others, why these States of the Union with a population of over twenty-three millions, the intelligent portion of which is already possessed by the spirit of conservatism, and by inclination no less than by interest is induced to follow conservative courses, should take their right and equal place in the coming great contest. So, I repeat, the path to the White House should not be closed to the men of the South, but rather broadened, that the standard of politics and government may be lifted up in our country.

A NATIONAL DEMOCRAT,